



# NEPAL







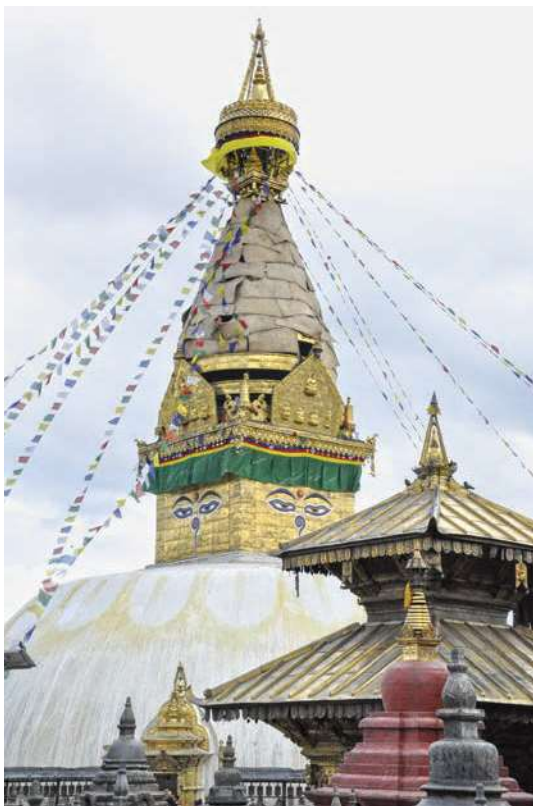
The heart of Nepal is its capital city, Kathmandu. There is only one main road that leads into Kathmandu, and that road is also the only way out. Situated in a valley surrounded by soaring mountains, Kathmandu has a population of about 1.4 million and about 6 million more people inhabit the small towns that share the Kathmandu Valley with the city. The ancient city is called the “gateway to the Himalayans,” and welcomes the throngs of tourist who give a big boost to the economy.

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Prayer flags frame the view of Kathmandu valley from the top of the famous “Monkey Temple” situated on a hilltop northwest of the city.

STORY PHOTOS: U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO





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The ancient temple of Swayambhunath Stupa, which overlooks Kathmandu Valley, is commonly known as The Monkey Temple due to the hundreds of monkeys that live inside the temple and the lush vegetation that surrounds it.

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Monkeys from the temple sometimes venture into the city and look for open windows to steal food or shiny objects. The monkeys are disliked by the locals for their tendency to be violent and mischievous.

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The streets of Kathmandu are crowded with people, vehicles and animals. Damage from the earthquake is evident by visible ruins where buildings crumbled and large amounts of construction. Dust still regularly clouds the city causing high levels of dirt and pollution.

For more of its history, Nepal's governance has been in flux. In 1768, Gurkha ruler Prithvi Naryan Shah conquered Kathmandu and laid the foundations for a unified kingdom. Some 45 years later, the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816) culminated in a treaty that established the current boundaries of modern Nepal, and in 1923 a treaty with Britain affirmed Nepal as a sovereign nation. From 1950 to 1955 Nepal was an absolute monarchy; however, that changed when a multi-party constitution was adopted in 1959. Up until 1972, the government fell under the rule of the king, who was advised by councils. That ended in 1980, when a Constitutional referendum was passed and direct elections for the national assembly were held. In 1990, pro-democracy groups joined by leftist groups forced the King to agree to a new democratic constitution, with the Nepali Congress Party sweeping into power in the elections. In the middle of the decade, a Maoist revolt started which lasted more than a decade and resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. In 2006, a peace treaty was signed between the Maoists and the government, which formally ended the insurgency, although political strife continued. In September 2015, the parliament finally passed a constitution which defines Nepal as a secular country and free elections were held making Nepal a federal secular parliamentary republic, with elections occurring again in February 2018.

The heart of the republic is its capital city, Kathmandu. The city is unique in many ways, hous-

ing palaces, bazaar type marketplaces and ancient temples; the most famous of which is Swayambhunath Stupa, or as it is more commonly known, The Monkey Temple. Situated on a hilltop northwest of the city, the temple is an ideal place to get a look at Kathmandu as it sprawls out across the valley. The temple, known as one of the holiest Buddhist temples in the country, is also home to hundreds of monkeys, who sometimes leave the temple and venture into the city. They can be seen crossing the crowded streets via the electricity lines that hang haphazardly across the road. Down below the streets are flooded with vehicles — many of which are now driven by women to the great consternation of some older male drivers — and the sidewalks are flooded with people.

Walking the streets, you can still see signs of the devastating earthquake that rocked the city on April 25, 2015. Demolished buildings are still part of the landscape and new construction is evident. The 7.8 magnitude earthquake was the worst quake to hit the area in more than 80 years, and was followed by two major aftershocks that were of a slightly lower magnitude. The earthquake affected more than 8 million people and took the lives of more than 8,000 people, injured more than 20,000 and left countless families homeless.

In the days and months following the earthquake, U.S. Army Special Operations Soldiers stepped in to assist where possible to meet the





immediate needs and to make plans for long-term solutions. At the center of those actions were members of the PACOM Augmentation Team that is based out of the U.S. Embassy in Nepal. Comprised of Special Forces, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Soldiers, the PAT works directly with the embassy staff and other U.S. Government agencies to build enduring relationships and to help promote stability in the sometimes chaotic governance of the country.

Working with local Nepali agencies and with members of the country team and other U.S. government agencies, the PATs have been able to build lasting relationships with the Nepali military, particularly with the Mahabir Rangers, and other non-government organizations — like Maiti Nepal — to make a difference within the country in the days, weeks and months following the 2015 earthquake.

Capt. Stefani Forgione, a Civil Affairs Planner on the PACOM Augmentation Team in Nepal, has worked closely with many Nepali agencies on building infrastructure that is necessary during emergency situations. One of the team's key partners is the USAID's Disaster Risk Reduction, Reconstruction and Resilience (DR4) Office, which is also based out of the embassy.

Over the most recent rotation of the PAT, the team worked hand-in-hand with Santosh Gyawali, a Senior Development Program Specialist in the DR4 office. Gyawali spent some time talking with Special Warfare about the efforts of not only the PAT, but the embassy as a whole, in the days following the earthquake.

## WALKING THE STREETS, YOU CAN STILL SEE SIGNS OF THE DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE THAT ROCKED THE CITY.



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“Shortly after the Haiti earthquake, the ambassador here in Nepal, started looking into the entire mission’s portfolio, and realized that there were many sources of U.S. Government funding going into the local government in various way and through various agencies,” said Gyawali, adding that the Department of Defense and non-governmental organizations were all working on a similar theme of reducing disaster in Nepal.

“Nepal is a hotspot for natural disasters,” Gyawali explained. “Basically we have landslides, flooding, earthquakes, forest fires — you won’t even believe it but 50 to 60 deaths every year are due to lightning strikes.”

In an effort to consolidate all disaster-focused projects, the D4R office started coordinating all disaster relief/preparedness projects for the embassy and brought together representatives from the Department of Defense, the Food and Drug Administration and USAID.

“We started with that notion of coordinating disaster risk-reduction efforts in the country. Following the 2015 earthquakes, we added to that the reconstruction and resiliency aspects of our planning,” said Gyawali, explaining that any projects planned would be resilient, i.e. built in such a way that they could withstand earthquakes and efforts would be made to ensure that the people could bounce back to normalcy as well.

“It has been a wonderful experience because of the beauty of collaboration. All of our (the different partner agencies) money has certain things we can do and things we cannot do. For instance,

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with some funding we can’t do infrastructure, so we have to work with local NGOs. The money the Pat team brings in can be used for infrastructure,” he explained.

With the projects the PAT takes on, all projects are built with very strict building codes, and in fact, helped create and implement building codes for the country. “With the PAT money, we practice what we preach in terms of infrastructure. We make sure building codes are implemented and train the builders on those codes, so that when they finish that project and move on to another





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The Crisis Management Center built on the Mahabir Ranger Base in Kathmandu has generators to supply power in case of power loss. It also has deep water wells for clean drinking water, fuel for vehicles and emergency communication systems.

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A plaque above the entrance to the Crisis Management Center dedicates it to the people of Nepal from the U.S.

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A Nepali Ranger and the PACOM Augmentation Team's Civil Affairs Planner discuss future needs for the Ranger base and the Crisis Management Center.

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Col. Anup Jung Thapa, commander of the Mahabir Ranger Regiment, and the PACOM Augmentation Team Director prepare to sign a training agreement.

site, they will take those best practices with them to the next site," Gyawali explained.

The nature of the funding that USAID brings to the table allows them to train people to work within the new facilities and to react to the problems that arise with natural disasters. In the case of the earthquake, the PAT's project was the construction of a Crisis Management Center in Kathmandu. The center was built on the Mahabir Ranger's Base. The CMC has huge generators that will supply power to the center and the base if the main power systems go down. It also has deep water wells that can provide clean drinking water, fuel for vehicles and emergency communication systems in place. To complement the center, USAID's previous projects provide people who know how to use the systems, how to conduct collapsed structure search and rescue, hospital preparedness for emergencies and training first responders. Following the earthquake, the Rangers opened their base to people who were left homeless and allowed them to stay there until they could find other housing options. The Rangers created programs to keep the people, especially the children, happy and healthy and shared their food with them.



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"Let me take you back before the earthquake show you how previous projects helped. We have been doing human capacity building since 1998. We've been running courses for medical first responders, collapsed structure search and rescue, hospital preparedness for emergencies. We brought in trainers from the United States for the initial training and then trained locals to be instructors," explained Gawain.

The training program, known as the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response provides regional training for 11 countries, and uses a cadre of trainers from throughout the region. The first iterations of training cost about \$30,000 per trainer, now because locals are trained as instructors, the cost is less than \$3,000. Additionally in the years leading up to the earthquake, the





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Members of the PACOM Augmentation Team talk to Mahabir Rangers outside the Regional Crisis Management Center located on the Ranger base in Kathmandu.

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A Mahabir Ranger practices search and rescue techniques, lowering down from a rope on a high wire to reach a casualty.

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Mahabir Rangers practice repelling, a critical skill for search and rescue.

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Mahabir Rangers showcase high-water rescue equipment.

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A Mahabir Ranger carefully guides a stretcher cradling a casualty as they are hoisted to safety during search and rescue training.

embassy did a study on open spaces in Kathmandu and they deconflicted those open spaces with the International Organization for Migration and found 83 places where they could set up Internally Displaced People Camps in the event of a natural disaster. At those locations, they already had deep water wells and built a hospital nearby that could withstand earthquakes and supplemented it with a blood bank that was designed with structural mitigation that would not be effected by seismic activity. Additionally, the U.S. Military conducted a Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange, which taught hospital staff how to react to widespread damage. All of these efforts paid off in the days and weeks following the earthquake.

Within 45 minutes of the earthquake, the doctors at the teaching hospital who had attended the training established field hospitals and were doing field surgeries within three hours. The Ministry of Affairs was able to welcome international assistance within a matter of hours because of the training, including a search and rescue team from India that arrived within four hours of the training. More than 90 percent of that team had taken the regional PEERS training, and could work in concert with the Nepali security forces who had also taken the same training.

"All of that past work allowed us to save a lot of lives and reduce human suffering and save property

and economic loss to the country when the earthquake hit," said Gyawali.

With the success of those previous projects, the PAT was able to get an idea of what projects would work and what would build on the previous successes. Forgione explained that her team took a lot of recommendations in order to make the project more substantial.

Gyawali said the success of the PATs project is impressive concerning their short tenure in the country.

"When you get into the country, you are supposed to understand the culture and the social activities and the economy — but that is going to take a lot of time," he said. "We expect the PAT to be experts in 48 hours and take over a project and go with it. They have been doing that because they have a very good structured hand-over process that has been a lifeline of continuity."

Once in country, Forgione said the team has to integrate itself into the embassy and build rapport with other agencies in order to share ideas. Once they get a grasp on what needs to be done, they can nominate projects for funding, most of which are public infrastructure. Through the nomination process, the team looks at what projects the embassy is already supporting, the priorities of the Office of Defense Cooperation and do assessments throughout the country to determine where the need is. The





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01 The treacherous single mountain road leading to the Nepal Police Force Disaster Management Training Center near Pokhara lacks proper infrastructure and multiple accidents occur daily.

02 An overturned vehicle that plummeted off the road into the churning river serves as the only reminder of the four people killed in the incident.


projects also have to meet the objectives of PACOM and Special Operations Command Pacific.

In Nepal, one of the key targets for improvement is the schools. A colossal number of the schools was damaged in the earthquakes, had the event happened on a school day instead of a Saturday, more than 30,000 students would have probably been lost. Improving the sustainability of the schools is high on the list or projects because the schools are the lifeline to the communities and can be used to account for people and to determine who may have been lost in an emergency. Another key area is the creation of emergency operations centers throughout Nepal.

One key center is located on top of a mountain on the road going into and out of Kathmandu. Lo-

cated halfway between Pokhara and Kathmandu, the site is the Nepal Police Force Disaster Management Training Center. The center was built using PAT funds but is sustained by funding from the police force. It is called the PEER Center based off of the training supplied to the police. The facility also has a trauma center which is staffed by members of the force.

The center is important because of its location. The road going between Kathmandu and Pokhara is the main artery and everything going into Kathmandu is trucked to the valley via the winding mountain road. Numerous accidents happen on the road every day, with an average of four people getting killed every day in traffic accidents that result from driver error or from natural disasters like rock slides. While the Special Warfare magazine staff was in Nepal, a visit to the center was derailed when a landslide blocked the road completely. Cars were backed up for miles and people left their vehicles to talk and wait for the road to reopen. On the left side of the road is a mountain, on the right side of the road is a cliff overlooking the river. Earlier that evening, a truck ran off the road and plummeted down the cliff, landing upside down in the river — four people died in that accident.

To build capacity to react to those kinds of incidents, the police forces are trained in collapsed structure search and rescue, swift water rescue and they become first responders. Every day one or two session of training occur at the center making it a practical staff college for the armed police force. 





## माइती नेपाल • Maiti Nepal

On any given night, hundreds of cars approach and cross the border between Nepal and India. On some nights, a group of women stand watch at the border. They are not awaiting a family member or a friend, but instead are looking for women who may be in danger ... women who have been sold into the sex trade by human traffickers.

The women, who work in close coordination with the border police and the Nepalese Government, are part of an organization known as Maiti Nepal. Organized in 1993, by Anuradha Koirala, a former English teacher, now activist and lecturer, who has dedicated her life to the fight against exploitation of women and children.

In Nepal, attitudes concerning women are changing, but in the villages — far removed from Kathmandu — many women are still treated like property. Women are second-class citizens, both legally and socially. In areas like this, it used to be commonplace for women who are having their menstrual cycle to be locked in boxes or beneath the floor of the barn because they were considered “unclean.” Even today, women and girls die from fires or snake bites that they cannot escape because of their isolation in the box. It has only been in recent years that women have been allowed to drive. It is this low value that is put on the lives of women that has made them targets for human traffickers, and also why the government, for many years, turned a blind eye to the problem.

Young girls are a financial liability to their families who must often pay a dowry for their daughters to marry. The female population between the ages of 8 and 18 is approximately 4,000,000 — most of them are at risk of being trafficked. The basic literacy rate among rural women is about 30 percent. An estimated 20,000 Nepalese girls were trafficked into brothels in India last year

and the number is increasing rapidly.

This was the harsh reality Koirala was introduced to in 1990. Koirala found herself visiting the same temple every day. On her way there, she encountered many women and children begging in the streets. She wanted to help. She stopped to talk to them and found that all of the women were survivors of domestic violence who had been thrown into the streets. She asked them why they didn't get a job instead of begging. They explained that because their husbands had thrown them out, they had no references and no one would give them a job.

She vowed to make a difference. Using her teaching salary, she gave the women jobs in a small store in the market place. The eight women she helped out told her about young girls who were being exploited by the sex trade, and sold into prostitution in brothels and dance clubs. Koirala again thought she had to help, and purchased a small house with two bedrooms and took in 10 young girls — children really — whom had been sold into the sex trade.

She soon realized that the problem was too big for her, and began organizing people to join her. She registered her organization Maiti Nepal with the government. Maiti means “mother's home.” The next year, in 1994, UNICEF agreed to help Maiti Nepal by providing funding. Today the PACOM Augmentation Team, which works in the embassy in Kathmandu, also supports the efforts of Maiti Nepal.

Koirala used the initial donation by UNICEF to go out into the villages and talk to people about what was really happening to their daughters. She didn't go alone. She had members of the police force, journalists, doctors, lawyers and nurses. They explained to the villagers that they were being

deceived. They let them know that the people who came to the village offering jobs to young women, were in fact, criminals. In the past the parents accepted the money, thinking their daughters were working in hotels or restaurants — never knowing that they had, in fact, been sold.

Statistics show that about 150,000 Nepalese women have been sold into the sex trade in India, but Maiti Nepal believes that number is much higher because many people still do not report their children as missing. Since its inception, Maiti Nepal has helped in the conviction or more than 425 people for selling children, and have a like number of cases still open.

Operating out of Kathmandu, the organization has number of prevention homes in areas where trafficking is very prone. The people are very poor in these areas and lack job training. At the homes, they receive training and are integrated into society.

At 10 of the border crossings into India, Maiti Nepal has transition homes for women and children who have been rescued. In each home, five women who were once imprisoned in the sex trade, monitor the border crossings, looking for women who are potentially being trafficked. The women will point individuals out to the border police who stop them and often arrest the traffickers. The women whom they have rescued are given options. They can go into training for a job or they can be reunited with their families. The latter is usually harder because many families see their daughters as shamed and do not want them in the home, particularly if they have had children or have contracted diseases like HIV.

Many of these women find their way to the organization's headquarters in Kathmandu. Tucked in the middle of the sprawling city, the organization's headquarters provides housing and training for the women who have been trafficked and education for their children. More than 315 students who had the potential of being trafficked also attend the school.

Recently more than 44 women were returned to Nepal from Qatar. All of the women had been sold into the sex trade in Qatar, and were arrested because the passports they were given were fake. Maiti Nepal volunteers were waiting with open arms to shelter the women and help them rebuild their lives. 